



# The **St. John Eagle**

*“Celebrating over 100 years, 1904 - 2007”*

*Member Congregation of the ELCA and LCMC*



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## ***St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church***

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### **From the Pastor's Pen Macintosh**

Normally I take this opportunity to address some issue or topic of concern that is local and that directly affects the life of St. John locally. However, for this edition of our newsletter I feel constrained to share with you an event that has happened on the national level but that eventually will no doubt affect us locally and quite directly.

The event was the “Goodsoil Eucharist,” a communion service that took place during, but was not officially a part of, this year’s ELCA Churchwide Assembly held this August in Chicago. Approximately six hundred people, including pastors and a number of ELCA bishops, attended the service, which was presided over by Bishop Margaret Payne of the New England Synod.

The cover of its bulletin titled the service “Anticipation of the Spirit’s Movement: A Goodsoil Celebration of the Vigil of Pentecost.” The bulletin characterized the service as “waiting for the gift of the Spirit to be poured out on flesh” and claimed to be “expansive in its use of language” and “grounded in the historic liturgy of the church.” According to many who were there, the claim for expansive language was true enough, but the claim for historically grounded liturgy was quite less true. And that is one of several deep concerns I have that grows out of this arguably semiofficial communion service.

The liturgy began with plenty of inclusive language, which in and of itself is not necessarily a concern, but in this instance a reasonable intent, in my opinion, has gone much too far. For example, one serious departure from historic liturgy came with the “inclusive” language of the “creed”:

*“I believe in God, maker of an unfinished world, who calls us to participate in bringing about the fullness of Creation . . . who has not divided people into rich and poor, owners and slaves, nor pitted us against each other because of race, color, social class or sex. I believe in Jesus Christ who was ridiculed, tortured and executed for the sins of humankind. He has overthrown the rule of evil and injustice and continues to judge and redeem the hatred and arrogance of human beings. [Please note there is nothing here about being incarnate or being raised from the dead.] I believe in the Spirit of God whose flame comforts us with divine presence and causes our hearts to burn for righteousness and justice . . . I believe that God, through people, can bring peace and hope, justice and equality, the relief of suffering and pain, and the final triumph of love and grace.”*

Yet another serious departure from traditional liturgy was the language of the “Lord’s Prayer.” Instead of praying words as our Lord taught us to pray, those attending the service were expected to say as follows:

*“Eternal Spirit, Earth-Maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver, source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all. Loving God, in whom is heaven. The hallowing of your name echoes through the universe! The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the earth! Your heavenly will be done by all created beings! Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and test, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever.”*

This prayer, according to what I have read, comes from the New Zealand Prayerbook, a product of the Anglican Church in New Zealand. It combines “the traditional prayer and forms of the Anglican Church of New Zealand with the earth-based spirituality of the Maori and other Pacific Island cultures.” There are those who would sanction the prayer’s diversity and simplicity, but I must strenuously disagree with the net theological result of this kind of language. Apparently, I am not alone; there were some among those attending this goodsoil service who preferred to pray the Lord’s Prayer as they have long known it.

As your pastor and as a Lutheran Christian, I have had increasing concerns about what is happening in the ELCA for some time. This service that took place during the national assembly of the church is yet another step toward what, in my considered theological judgment, is a serious departure from--even the ultimate loss of--the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

While the claims are that this kind of thing is traditional and Trinitarian, I sincerely believe that that is just not the reality of what is happening. The prayer, as well as the creed, are driven by a political correctness and agenda that have invaded the church to the downplaying, even exclusion, of the proclamation of God’s redeeming work in the atonement of Jesus Christ to restore sinful humanity to Himself.

The language and hidden agenda of the goodsoil movement are ultimately polytheistic, animistic, modalistic, and works righteous, among others, and are neither Lutheran nor even Christian and are, in the end, pure heresy. The four words I have just used, in particular, are more or less technical, I realize, but in a nutshell they ultimately mean that the language and hidden agenda of the goodsoil movement compromise and/or deny the very divinity of God

- by acknowledging and accepting multiple godheads
- by asserting that nature and natural objects possess conscious life or souls
- by denying personal distinctions within the Trinity contrary to Scripture’s witness to one God in three Persons
- by elevating human good works for social justice to supersede God’s exclusive role as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

I am greatly saddened to think that such a departure from the gospel of Jesus Christ has moved within the confines of the ELCA.

There are those in the church who find theological matters of little concern because either they are not aware of the issues and their implications or they feel that the issues don’t affect them. I believe this seemingly innocent and innocuous communion service presided over by Bishop Payne is a misguided exercise of her role as a bishop and is indicative of the insidious and more and more pervasive departure within the ELCA from what is truly Trinitarian and theologically sound.

I share these thoughts with you for your information and to encourage all of us at St. John to be more and more vigilant of such developments in the larger church as we here at St. John move into the future.

SERVING ST. JOHN WITH OUR TIME AND TALENTS –

**During September:**

**Ushers**

Carole Grayson  
Raudna Pelletier

**Lay Assistant**

9/2 Sue Reed  
9/9 Linda Phyles  
9/16 Fred Faust  
9/23 Angie Cornwell  
9/30 Dan Eisenberg

**Custodial**

9/2 Phyles  
9/9 Berg/Grayson/Othote  
9/16 Gemma  
9/23 Valletti/Carson  
9/30 Dancewicz

**Lector**

9/2 Judy Othote  
9/9 Dan Eisenberg  
9/16 Dan Eisenberg  
9/23 Fred Faust  
9/30 Fred Faust

**Childcare**

9/2 Rick & Cheryl  
9/9 Kristin & Kira  
9/16 Chip & Shannon  
9/23 Kyle & Heather  
9/30 Rick & Cheryl

**Coffee Hour**

9/2  
9/9 Judy & Cheryl  
9/16 Raudna & Carole  
9/23 Linda & Susan  
9/30 Bert & Mary

**During October:**

**Ushers**

Chip Bott  
Rick Cormier

**Lay Assistant**

10/7 Steve Gemma  
10/14 Sue Reed  
10/21 Linda Phyles  
10/28 Fred Faust

**Custodial**

10/7 Reed  
10/14 Phyles  
10/21 Berg/Grayson/Othote  
10/28 Gemma

**Lector**

10/7 Linda Phyles  
10/14 Linda Phyles  
10/21 Sue Dancewicz  
10/28 Sue Dancewicz

**Childcare**

10/7 Kristin & Kira  
10/14 Chip & Shannon  
10/21 Kyle & Heather  
10/28 Rick & Cheryl

**Coffee Hour**

10/7 Lydia  
10/14 Linda & Becky  
10/21 Sue & Lisa  
10/28 Mary & Jack Plumb

**During November:**

**Ushers**

Volunteers  
Needed

**Lay Assistant**

11/4 Angie Cornwell  
11/11 Dan Eisenberg  
11/18 Steve Gemma  
11/25 Sue Reed

**Custodial**

11/4 Valletti/Carson  
11/11 Dancewicz  
11/18 Reed  
11/25 Phyles

**Lector**

11/4 Phil/Sue Reed  
11/11 Phil/Sue Reed  
11/18 Tom Knowlton  
11/25 Tom Knowlton

**Childcare**

11/4 Kristin & Kira  
11/11 Chip & Shannon  
11/18 Kyle & Heather  
11/25 Rick & Cheryl

**Coffee Hour**

11/4 Shannon & Angie  
11/11 Judy & Cheryl  
11/18 Raudna & Carole  
11/25 Linda & Susan

**\*\*Please ask someone to fill in for you if you are unable to make it when you are scheduled. Phone numbers are in the church directory.**

## ST. JOHN NEWS AND NOTES –

During the summer months, communion was only celebrated on the first Sunday of each month. We will now return to our regular schedule of celebrating communion twice a month. In September, communion will be celebrated on the second (9/9) and fourth (9/23) due to the Labor Day holiday. Starting in October, we will return to celebrating the Sacrament on the first and third Sunday of each month.

In response to needs at their requests, St. John has sent \$50.00 to each of the following organizations: Haven from Hunger, Plummer Home for Boys and Arise! A Christian Congregation (a sister LCMC congregation) in need of a place to worship.

In June, Helvi Anderson passed away. She has left a memorial gift of \$2000.00 to St. John in honor of her parents Walter & Elsa Anderson.

Sunday, August 5, new offering plates were dedicated. The new plates are presented by Linda and Paul Berg in loving memory of their parents, Eino and Ellen Berg. We are grateful to Paul and Linda for the fitting memorial to their parents, who worshipped regularly and cared lovingly for this sanctuary.

On August 23, Pastor Phyles conducted funeral services for Florence Elizabeth Healey, Quail Road, Peabody. We extend our condolences to her family.

New photo directories of the congregation are available on the counter shelf downstairs. These are free for the taking by the congregation. However, their cost for production prompts a request for each family to make a suggested donation of \$5.00. Cash may be given to Fred Faust, or an additional amount may be added to your offering envelope, with the purpose noted on the envelope. We hope you will enjoy and use the directory to contact other members and friends of the congregation.

Our volunteer lists need more volunteers! Please consider serving your church as lay assistant, lector, or a member of the choir. There are also other opportunities to serve as a cleaner, coffee hour host, usher and the list could go on and on! If you have any questions, suggestions or ideas in this regard, please speak with Pastor, Linda Phyles or Steve Gemma.

### PLEASE RECYCLE

In an effort to do our part to help with the environment, we ask those that do not take home their weekly church bulletins to recycle them in the recycle bin located downstairs. In addition to used bulletins, any clean paper at the church should be recycled. Every little bit helps toward a greener environment.

### PAST HAPPENINGS

Congratulations to Thomas George Winsor who received his First Communion on June 3. We rejoice with him and his family as he reaches this milestone in his spiritual journey and begins his lifelong reception of the Sacrament.

On June 3, we began using new bulletin covers that are unique to St. John. Using these new covers every Sunday will realize a modest savings as well as reduce waste.

Our annual Church Picnic was held Sunday, June 10, at Camp Naumkeag in Salem. An informal worship service was held at 10:30 followed by wonderful food, fellowship and group games. Thank you to all who made this day enjoyable.

We would like to give a sincere thank you to Tom Knowlton, Steve Gemma, and Tom Powell for filling in for Pastor while he was away. A lot of preparation goes into providing the message. Thank you for your contributions to our ministry, your leadership is genuinely appreciated.

We would also like to thank Angie Cornwell and Susan Dancewicz for their organ accompaniment while Margaret Knowlton was on vacation this summer. We appreciate the musical talent they bring to our ministry.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, September 9, will be the start of Sunday School classes. Sunday School classes will be from 11:00a.m. to 12:00p.m. Please remember to bring your completed registration forms to the first class.

We need to remind members and friends of the congregation to conclude the coffee hour accordingly so that classes can begin and end on time. Thank you for your consideration and understanding in this matter.

Peabody's International Festival will be held on Sunday, September 9, beginning at 11:00a.m. This year, St. John's WELCA group will be selling Nisu. Please plan to attend and show your support. If you have any questions or can help in any way, please contact Becky Comeau.

The next meal St. John will serve at Haven From Hunger will be Tuesday, September 11. Please help as you are able.

The Bible Study led by Tom Knowlton, which met on Wednesday evenings prior to the summer, will resume their weekly meetings starting September 12, beginning at 7:30p.m. All interested persons are cordially invited to attend.

Sunday School teachers will be installed on Sunday, September 16. Please plan to attend.

The Annual Fall Kick-off will be held Saturday, September 22, at 6:00p.m. The evening will begin with a pot-luck supper followed by a program which will be announced.

As most of us are aware, St. John has elected to utilize direct benevolences, supporting specific ministries with our benevolence moneys. One of the ministries we have chosen to support has been the missionaries of the Eastern European Mission, staffed by the Atlanta, Georgia, church where our own Angie Cornwell's father is pastor. These missionaries have worked hard to bring the good news of the gospel to people who were formerly behind the Iron Curtain. We are very pleased to announce that Mr. Kenneth Wong, one of the missionaries to eastern Europe, will be present with us on Sunday, September 30, to bring the message and share aspects of his ministry. We look forward to his visit and urge everyone in the St. John family to mark your calendars and plan to be present on September 30. We need to support Mr. Wong's ministry and the outreach it provides to St. John through our benevolence support.

The annual Fall Fair will be coming soon. Please watch the Sunday bulletins for more details.